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Spirit of the Place: A Sampling of Photographs and Art

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Mine Victim, Augusto Baptista Chimuna, age 33, and his family are Internal Displaced People (IDP) due to the civil war in Angola. They have lived for year in a tent provided by the government. Augusto often volunteers to teach the youngsters to read and write. March 1997. C-print, 15 X 24 inches.

Don Doll, S.J.

As a photographer, I see the world through the lens of who I am and the life I have lived. I can't help but photograph from the life of faith that I have grown into as a priest over the past twenty-five years.

Often I find myself praying that I can look upon and photograph people with something of the empathy and understanding God has for them.

Often I am asked if being a priest affects my photography. My answer is always, "Yes, it has everything to do with it." For me it is hard to separate the creative process of seeing from prayer. Both are contemplative acts.

Both involve an openness to the spirit — a willingness to let go of one's presuppositions and go with the hunches and intuitions that arise deep within one's heart where I believe the spirit speaks within each of us.

I often struggle to separate myself from doing what other photographers have done in similar situations and to trust my own insights. I try to live a quote from Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation*:

How do you expect to reach your perfection by leading someone else's life... You must have the humility to work out your own salvation in a darkness where you are absolutely alone . . . It takes heroic humility to be yourself and to be nobody but the man or artist God intended you to be.

Jesuits have a mission — "Faith doing Justice." I photograph to tell the stories of people who have no voice. I hope I can help others understand and work to change unjust social structures.

